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SUBJECT: USG ASSISTANCE SAVES LIVES AFTER TYPHOON FRANK

REF: A) Manila 1504 B) Manila 1521 C) Manila 1543 D) Manila 1560 E)
Manila 1582

11. Summary: Coordinated U.S./Philippine efforts during a critical two-week period following the landfall of Typhoon Frank saved many people from thirst and hunger in the ten areas of greatest devastation. Our assistance also generated tremendous good will and emphasized for Filipinos once again the humanitarian aspect of the U.S. military. Typhoon Frank pounded 49 Philippine provinces June 21-22 and killed 557 people, injured 826, and left 26 people missing. Another 800 crew and passengers are presumed dead after the sinking of a ferry. USAID and its Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), Philippine and U.S. military forces, and Embassy staff were on the ground providing critical, life-saving provisions and services to the hardest-hit areas. The extensive press coverage overall shed a positive light on the financial assistance, relief supplies, and coordinated efforts by the USG and its Philippine partners. The USG humanitarian assistance totaled \$2,169,625, which saved lives and reinforced our friendship with the Philippines. End summary.

Devastation Caused by Typhoon Frank

12. Typhoon Frank (international name "Typhoon Fengshen") affected over four million people in 49 provinces across the Philippines, and nearly 39,000 of these people are still in evacuation centers. The Philippine National Disaster Coordinating Council estimates damage of \$260 million to agriculture and infrastructure. A significant number of the dead and missing were on the ferry MV Princess of the Stars when it capsized during the typhoon on June 21. Of 866 passengers and crew members on the manifest, there were only 56 survivors, 173 confirmed dead, and the balance are missing, including two American citizens. The final number may be higher, as there were likely un-ticketed children and other passengers aboard. Other typhoon-related deaths and injuries were caused by floods, falling objects, capsized boats, and electrocutions.

Targeted and Effective U.S. Assistance

13. The United States was swift in its response with initial disbursement of \$100,000 from USAID/OFDA to the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) on June 23 for the purchase and distribution of emergency relief supplies, including blankets, plastic mats, mosquito nets, and water containers. The USS Ronald Reagan and its carrier group arrived west of Panay Island on June 25. In coordination with the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Philippine government, and the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC), U.S. Navy aircraft flew about 320 sorties to deliver over 500,000 pounds of relief commodities between June 25 and July 2. In addition

to carrying relief supplies donated by the U.S., the sorties carried supplies from the Philippine government, non-governmental organizations, and third countries.

¶4. Helicopters and C-2 aircraft transported Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and USG personnel, including the Ambassador, to otherwise inaccessible areas on Panay and Sicogon islands. These relief goods, including water, food, and shelter material, saved lives in remote areas of the Philippines.

¶5. On June 26, a two-person USAID/OFDA team joined the eight U.S. Embassy personnel in Iloilo to assess needs and work with Department of Defense and Philippine counterparts to coordinate the U.S. assistance. USAID/OFDA airlifted hygiene kits, plastic sheeting, and water containers valued at more than \$560,000, which U.S. Navy helicopters transported to remote affected areas. DOD's logistical support and \$123,700 in additional supplies amounted to \$1,503,900. Again, military aircraft allowed relief supplies to reach to isolated populations that would have otherwise struggled to survive.

¶6. The Navy vessel USNS Stockham arrived at the site of the capsized MV Princess of the Stars on June 24 with small boats, two search and rescue helicopters and an underwater scuba team to assist the AFP and Philippine Coast Guard with rescue operations. The Stockham increased the Philippines' search and rescue capabilities while the hope of finding survivors flickered. It left the typhoon-affected area on July 1.

¶7. Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and other high-ranking Philippine officials, civilian and military, have

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expressed their deep gratitude and personal thanks for the immediate and generous response delivered to the most desperate Filipinos during this tragic period. U.S. Navy sailors and helicopter pilots who were instrumental in the effort were personally congratulated by President Arroyo when she arrived in Iloilo City on July 1. In addition, President Arroyo offered her personal thanks to Rear Admiral Phil Wisecup, commander of the Ronald Reagan Strike Group and Commodore Brad Smith, Captain of the Stockham, following the memorial mass for the victims of the ferry sinking held on Sibuyan Island on July 1. Philippine officials and non-governmental organizations are now concentrating on long-term rebuilding of typhoon-damaged communities.

Positive Message on U.S. Relief Efforts

¶8. U.S. relief efforts garnered extensive and overall very positive media coverage, with a number of pictures of U.S. disaster relief efforts in the national and regional print and broadcast media. While initially there was some skepticism expressed by Manila-based media about the humanitarian capabilities of the USS Ronald Reagan carrier group as well as allegations of a hidden agenda, Philippine authorities including President Arroyo quickly countered this notion. Media coverage emphasized the joint U.S.-Philippine aspect of the humanitarian assistance with photos and reports of U.S. military personnel working alongside their Armed Forces of the Philippines counterparts and with local relief groups including the Philippine Red Cross and the National Disaster Coordinating Council. Coverage dominated the headlines both on TV and in print from June 23-July 4 and ongoing media coverage continues to mention U.S. assistance in the wake of Typhoon Frank. Media were also intrigued by the stories of sailors from the Reagan Strike Group with Philippine family ties.

¶9. Comment: This compassionate USG response saved lives, augmented our already-close relationship, and brought positive press coverage. Without the airlift provided by U.S. forces, many remote and ravaged areas of the Philippines would have been very difficult to reach, leaving many residents hungry, thirsty, and without shelter. Through close collaboration with Philippine government and civil society, our team on the ground was able to pinpoint hard to access areas and deliver the commodities that they desperately needed. When the Ambassador, USAID Mission Director, and Philippine and U.S.

military officers visited remote sites and took part in delivering goods, they witnessed the difference this made on an individual level. U.S. assistance alleviated the suffering of thousands of people.

KENNEY